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LAFAYETTE VISTAS

LEIGH CREEKSIDE PARK NOW A REALITY

State Funding Accelerates Purchase

Saturday, October 23, was a picture perfect day for celebrating. And there was much to celebrate. A neighborhood's enthusiasm and generosity. The bi-partisan support of local politicians. And the dedication of Leigh Creekside Park at Fourth Street and Moraga Blvd.

In the midst of one of Lafayette's most densely populated residential areas, the three-quarter acre park borders Las Trampas Creek, and is next to and visible from the heavily used Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail. A majestic Oak dominates the site, and trees planted by long-time Lafayette residents John and Ethel Leigh, who lived on the property, dot its edges.

Accepting certificates to recognize their contributions toward the park are:
(Lt) The Christophes
(Rt) Russell Schaeffer
(Ctr) Roland Mullen

In the fall of 1998, a City staff member noticed the property while biking to work through the neighborhood. It had been mowed in preparation for sale after Mr. Leigh's death.

The staff proposed that the City purchase the property to be used as a public park. The City Council supported this proposal, and asked the Parks & Recreation Commission to gather public opinion, analyze funding possibilities, and make recommendations regarding the project.

Forty neighbors attended the Dec. '98 Parks & Recreation Commission meeting, and were unanimous in their support for purchasing the property. The Christophe and Cass families formed the Leigh Creekside Park Committee to raise as much money as they could, as quickly as possible. Within a month they had collected $25,000, and their continued efforts increased that amount to more than $35,000. These funds, together with $350,000 State funds appropriated in July 1999, covered the purchase price and closing fees for the $375,000 property.

The $350,000 appropriation in the State budget came after Senator Richard Rainey, R-Walnut Creek made a "member's request" for that amount at the urging of former Lafayette City Council member Anne Grodin. Assembly members Lynne Leach, R-Walnut Creek and Tom Torlakson, D-Antioch also lent their support to the project, which was ultimately signed by Governor Gray Davis in July 1999.

Local artist Nikki Basch-Davis and The Outsiders, a group of Bay Area plein air artists, also worked to raise money for the new park. In October 1999, six artists presented 45 paintings during a month-long show featuring local paintings that was hosted by Postino restaurant on Mt. Diablo Blvd. Proceeds from the opening reception will also be used to develop the park.

The City plans to preserve Leigh Creekside Park in its natural state, as a resting spot for people using the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail, and as a place for family picnics. Modest improvements, including benches and a water fountain, should be completed by next summer.

HISTORIC SNAPSHOTS

Part 8:
Lafayette in the 1950s

Family-Oriented Home Design Celebrates Small-Town Suburban Setting

The War years of the mid-1940s set the stage for unprecedented population growth in Contra Costa County. Initially, well-paying wartime jobs lured workers, but once the war ended, many people stayed. A good number of people who had passed through the Bay Area in the armed services also settled here, and extended family often joined them.

By 1950, Lafayette was beginning to grow beyond its downtown. As the great postwar housing surge continued, a number of builders made an imprint on the area. In Lafayette, Jack Marchant, who headed Marchant Construction from the early 1950s through the 1970s, played a particularly significant role in defining our city's family-oriented suburban neighborhoods.

The Silver Springs development contains approximately 30 of the "ranch-style" homes built by Jack Marchant.

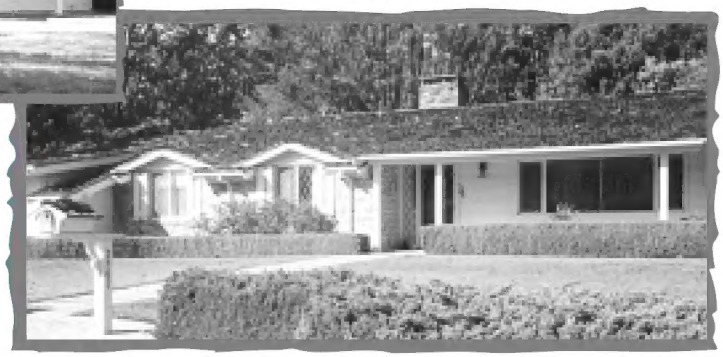
"He built at least 50 homes a year for a long time," says John Ward, who worked with Marchant until establishing Ward Construction, which is still in operation. "That was one foundation a week, rain or shine, for more than 20 years."

In fact, Marchant was part of a movement in suburban design that embraced the concept of "modern living" and low-slung "California Ranch-style" houses that blended into the landscape. Grading on Marchant projects was typically minimized, thus leaving the tracts in a rolling, "naturalistic" (as opposed to flat and gridlike) state.

At first Marchant built small clusters of four to five homes, but soon had his hand in developing larger tracts and then entire neighborhoods. He built approximately one-third of the homes in Burton Valley, as well as many homes in the Silver Springs, Peardale, Happy Valley, Spring Dell, and Spring Hill areas. Astonishingly, Marchant may have built one-quarter of the approximately 8,500 homes in Lafayette.

Although purists might not agree, Marchant homes, with their long horizontal form and low-pitched roofs, show the unmistakable influence of world-renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. "The ranch-style houses we built had a sloping 4-in-12 pitch roof, as opposed to today's 8- and 12-in-12 pitched roofs that really change the mass of a house. Our homes were very low profile and always had wood shake or shingle roofs," says Hirsch Morton, who worked as Marchant Construction's designer.

"The houses almost always had front and rear porches, too, that made them seem very spacious" continues Morton. "People who came out here from back east felt like they were living outdoors." Other amenities in Marchant-built ranch homes included family rooms and sloping ceilings with exposed beams in the living rooms. Brick fireplaces were common, and many fireplace walls also had built-in barbecues.



"One thing Marchant never built was a carport," says Morton. "He didn't think they went with the look or feel of ranch style. All his houses had garages."

More than just the leading builder of Lafayette's neighborhoods, Marchant was also one of the City's "founding fathers." He was a leader of the drive to incorporate, and was elected to Lafayette's first City Council in 1968. Marchant died in 1986.

SEABORG FOUNDATION ESTABLISHED

Fund Seeks To Preserve Open Space, Honor Nobel Prize Chemist And Long-Time Lafayette Resident

Glenn T. Seaborg was a Nobel Prize winning chemist and long-time resident of Lafayette. He was also an avid hiker and an open space advocate who lobbied for land preservation in the East Bay through testimony to City Councils and Planning Commissions. Recently, his son David established a foundation to honor his father's memory, and to ensure that his preservation work would continue.

The Seaborg Fund seeks to protect undeveloped land in Lafayette and the surrounding area through purchase. Currently, the foundation's board is considering three specific sites: the 4-acre Jennings property off Monticello Rd., parts of Burton Ridge, and land adjacent to the Lafayette Reservoir.

Just months after Seaborg's death in early 1999, the foundation had already raised $7,000. A matching grant donated by one of Seaborg's East Bay admirers means that every dollar contributed to the cause becomes two dollars. Volunteers are doing all foundation work, so that every dollar will go to preserving space. All donations are fully tax deductible

For more information about the Seaborg Fund, contact David Seaborg at 938-9206. Checks should be made payable to the Seaborg Open Space Fund, and sent to Diana Sanderson, Treasurer, Seaborg Open Space Fund, 1460 Maria Lane, Suite 350, Walnut Creek CA 94596.

Libraries in the News

City Council Supports New Library Construction; County Supervisors Put Library Tax On 2000 Ballot

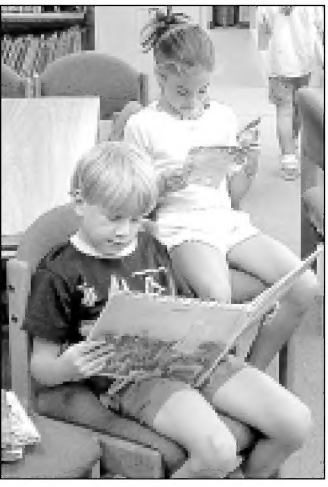
Lafayette's Library Vision 2000 Task Force presented a special report at a town hall meeting hosted by the City Council and the School Board on October 12. The report addressed a number of important issues regarding Lafayette's existing and future library facility and services. Although much remains to be resolved, the City Council agreed to move forward to select and acquire a site and develop a plan for a new library that will serve Lafayette well into the 21st century.

Even though traffic conditions at the existing library are a problem, the task force recommended keeping the new facility centrally located and easily accessible. Students from Lafayette Elementary and Stanley Middle School, about 1,700 of the district's 3,500 students, can easily walk to the library now.

The task force recommended three possible locations:

- property occupied by the existing library, with the addition of the adjoining site currently occupied by a medical office building, on Moraga Road;
- a 2.4 acre undeveloped site at the intersection of Moraga and St. Mary's Roads;
- land currently occupied by two retail stores at Golden Gate Way and Second Street.

The task force also recommended that the City appoint a building planning team and use specialized library design software to create preliminary designs for a new facility. At the same time, the City will develop a plan to fund the construction of a new library with a combination of public and private monies.



Funding For Operations

Just days before the Lafayette Town Hall Meeting about the library, County supervisors decided to let voters determine whether to provide more money and resources for the library system. The proposal is similar to the one that narrowly missed the necessary two-thirds vote in 1997, and is the fourth library funding ballot in seven years. The previous three all failed.

The proposed 1/8-cent sales tax increase on the ballot next November would raise $10.3 million yearly to keep all libraries open at least 48 hours weekly. Passage would also guarantee an increased budget for books and materials, and for added computers and other technology.

Under the library tax measure, the county would be divided into 5 regions that would control how their tax share is spent. After basic services are guaranteed, regions would receive money according to a formula based one-half on population and one-half on the previous year's library circulation. Lafayette would fare well under the formula: we have a large total circulation in comparison to our population, ranking third of the 19 city libraries in the county.

Around Town

Feb 7 **GOLD COAST CHAMBER PLAYERS** – 2nd in a series of three. 8pm, Town Hall Theatre. Tickets 283-1557; Info: 283-3728.

LAFAYETTE NEWCOMERS CLUB – Social organization with activities ranging from coffees, reading groups, mom & tot events, game nights and fitness activities. Event and membership information: 974-9360, Questions:942-1069.

TOWN HALL THEATRE: Upcoming Shows
Box Office: 283-1557 Open Tues-Sat: 1-6 pm.

- **Thru 2/13:** Gigi
- **3/30 – 4/22:** Zorba, the Musical
- **2/25 – 3/12:** The Wizard of Oz – Artz 4 Kidz

CITY PARKS & RECREATION – 284-2232

Adult Classes: Call for prices and times.

- CPR & First Aid, Bridge, Cooking Workshops, Dog Obedience, Exercise & Fitness, Internet Basics, Swing & Ballroom Dance

Teen Activities: 284-5815 (6-12 grade)
(Volunteer chaperones needed for teen events!)

- **ACE OF CLUBS CONCERTS:** (High School only) Call 284-5815 for dates, locations and bands.
- **FLIPSIDE DANCE CLUB:** (High School only) 2/26, 3/25, 4/22, 9-midnight, $5, no reservations needed, Laf. Com. Ctr.; High School ID required.
- **MOVIE MADNESS:** (Junior High only) 2/4, 3/17, 4/21, 6:30–9:00 pm, $5, reservations required, Laf. Com. Ctr.
- **TWILIGHT ZONE PARTY:** (7th & 8th grades only) 3/24, 7:00–11:30 pm, Laf. Com. Ctr.
- **SPRING BREAK TRIP TO DISNEYLAND & MORE!** April 4-6
- **SKI & SNOWBOARD TRIPS:** 1/29 – 4/15, approximately, every other weekend.

Family Events

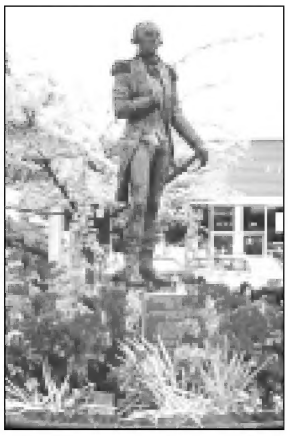
- **PARENT'S NIGHT OUT:** Saturday nights, 6:30 – 10:30pm, 1/22, 2/12, 2/26, 3/11, 3/25, 4/8, 4/29

City Testing New Approach for Improved Safety at Trail Crossings

In October, the City installed a new method of slowing traffic where the Lafayette/Moraga Trail crosses Glenside Rd. Essentially an extra wide speed bump with a crosswalk on top, the effect of the "speed table" will be evaluated by Lafayette's Circulation Commission. The commission will then make recommendations about installing similar traffic slowing devices at other trail crossings. If you have any comments or suggestions about the raised crosswalk, please contact Leah Greenblatt, Transportation Planner, at 284-1976.

Redevelopment Agency Adopts Ambitious Five-Year Plan

The City Council, acting as the governing board of the Redevelopment Agency, has adopted a $ 4.5 million spending plan for the next five years. The "Five Year Implementation Plan" calls for investments in library reconstruction, public parking, and improvements to traffic flow in the area of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Road. In addition, the Agency will be evaluating alternatives for encouraging affordable housing, with immediate attention to housing for persons with developmental or physical disabilities.



The goals of the Agency are to encourage downtown revitalization and to increase affordable housing opportunities. By investing in public projects that improve the overall quality of the downtown, and by assisting desirable private projects such as the Town Center, the Agency helps to improve the local economy and to eliminate conditions that discourage private investment.

The Redevelopment Agency is financed by a share of the growth in property tax revenue within the Mount Diablo Boulevard corridor. New private investment and changes in property ownership usually lead to increases in assessed valuation, which generate higher property tax revenue. State law requires that 20% of this "tax increment" must be set aside for affordable housing projects. Of the remainder, about 25% is returned to the other taxing agencies such as the County and the school districts. Based on the remaining cash flow, the Agency will be able to issue tax-exempt bonds to raise capital for investment in downtown Lafayette.

The Agency has directed the staff to begin preparing for a bond issue in fall,2000 that would generate at least $3.6 million. That amount, plus the net tax increment after debt service and administrative costs, will provide about $4.5 million for the following priority projects:

- $1.5 million toward the costs of site acquisition and construction of a new branch library
- $200,000 for conceptual design, engineering and environmental work for the new branch library
- $800,000 toward the Elam Brown Plaza project and related traffic improvements at Mt. Diablo and Moraga Road
- $500,000 to help expand the supply of public parking in downtown (this amount is in addition to about $1.0 million in the City's Parking Fund)
- $500,000 to repay loans from the City of Lafayette to get the Agency started and to fund a series of capital improvement projects over the prior five years
- $300,000 to help facilitate private projects that may arise over the next five years
- $400,000 toward 20 units of "special needs" housing for persons with developmental or physical disabilities
- $300,000 for assistance to other private projects proposing affordable housing for seniors and others

This "Five-Year Implementation Plan" was developed by the City Council over a three-month period involving five meetings and a public hearing on November 22, 1999. Copies of the Five-Year Implementation Plan are available at the City Offices and on the City's web site.

CITY DIRECTORY

Leave your Council Members a message!
Call 284-1968

Council Members		EXT.
Jay Strauss	**Mayor**	**270**
Ivor Samson	**Vice Mayor**	**272**
Carol Federighi	**Council Member**	**273**
Erling Horn	**Council Member**	**271**
Don Tatzin	**Council Member**	**274**

New City Council Members were seated 11/22/99

For messages to **all** Council Members: **907**

Administration

General Reception and	**284-1968**
Steven Falk, City Manager	**Fax: 284-3169**
Rebecca Lee, Director Admin. Srvcs.	**299-3227**
Gonzalo Silva, Financial Srv. Mgr.	**299-3213**
Sue Jusaitis, City Clerk	**299-3212**

Community Development

• **Engineering Services**	**284-1951**
Tony Coe, Manager	**299-3203**
• **Planning Services**	**284-1976**
Mike Henn, Manager	**Fax: 284-1122**
• **Public Works Services**	
Ron Lefler, Manager	**299-3214**
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	**299-3259**

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Shanks, Analyst	**299-3216**
	Or 299-3215

Parks and Recreation — 284-2232

Jennifer Russell, Director	
Yvonne Ozorio, Senior Services	**284-5050**
Teen Programs	**284-5815**

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	**911**
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	**284-5010**
Police Business Office:	**283-3680**

Anonymous Tipline & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3232 X 2205

Hours: **M -F: 8:00 - 12:00 & 1:00 - 5:00**

Addresses

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Street Address:	**3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210**
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	Lafayette, CA 94549-1968
E-mail:	**lafay1968@aol.com**
Website:	**www.ci.lafayette.ca.us**

LAFAYETTE

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